

COUNT JOSEPH DORFEUILLE, NATURAL SCIENTIST

Joseph Dorfeuille (1790 to July 23, 1840), was a cultured French aristocrat who traveled extensively in Europe, the Orient and America before settling in Cincinnati around 1820 where he invested his money in the Western Museum, wherein was shown the "best natural history collection on the continent". Dorfeuille was of course interested in entomology along with his interest in music, art, languages, books, etc. One of his museum exhibits consisted of colored drawings of parasitical insects. Thomas Say corresponded with him and there are other indications of his interest in entomology especially his scrapbook wherein are drawings and tables relating to insect classification. In 1834 he apparently ran a type foundry in Cincinnati because Thomas Say ordered type from him. As science was not sufficient to attract enough paying citizens to his museum Dorfeuille with the help of others arranged for a tableau representing the Inferno, Purgatory and Paradise. This was known to the public as the "Infernal Regions" or "Dorfeuille's Hell". In the Cincinnati papers it was advertised as "Dante's Hell". Joseph moved to New York City around 1838 and established his "Infernal Regions" in the City Saloon (formerly Hanington's Diorama) and next door to the American Museum, according to an advertisement in the "Morning Courier and New York Enquirer" of May 29, 1839. The City Saloon, 218 Broadway was a large exhibition room at the same address as John Scudder's American Museum. The most complete and interesting account of Joseph Dorfeuille and his activities was written by Elizabeth R. Kellogg under the title "Joseph Dorfeuille and the Western Museum". This appeared in volume 22, No. 4 of "The Journal of the Cincinnati Society of Natural History" for April 1945.—H.B.W.